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ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to investigate the pay expectations of graduating seniors, and specifically, the relationship between gender and pay expectations for one's self and others. The main purpose of the study was to determine if women and men differed in their initial pay expectations. Surveys were received from 447 college seniors, including 100 pretest surveys. Respondents were majoring in Agriculture, Business, Engineering, Social Sciences, and "other" composed of Nursing, Education, and Human Ecology. Except women in Social Sciences, respondents expected their starting salaries to be higher than the starting salaries of others. Compared to males, females expected lower peak salaries for themselves and lower peak salaries for the "best" others in their fields. Engineering reported the highest salaries. Females in Agriculture also expected higher peak salaries for themselves while females from "Other" majors had lower salary expectations. Across all colleges except "Other," women expected fairly comparable salaries. Additionally, females in Engineering, Business, and "Other" majors expected lower initial salaries for themselves; they also believed lower starting salaries were fair salaries, compared to males in those same fields. The study concludes that the differing meanings of money are a possible explanation for the gender wage gap. Contains 33 references. (GLR)

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Explaining the Gender Wage Gap: Pay Expectations for Self, Others, and Perceptions of "Fair Pay"

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The issue of pay equity or the gender wage gap has received documented attention by a variety of social scientists. Even in the presence of pay inequity, women ironically were equally satisfied as men with their jobs (Crosby, 1982). Crosby has labeled this phenomena, "the paradox of the contented female worker."

Research has focused on explaining this pay paradox. Terborg's and Ilgen's (1975) research focused on gender stereotypes as a theoretical explanation for pay inequity. Other avenues have been pursued including comparative referents (Major, 1989), pay expectations (Major and Deaux, 1982), and perceptions of fair pay (Jackson and Grabski, 1988). Most studies examined career peak pay situations. With the exceptions of Jelinek and Harlan (1980) and Major and Konar (1984), researchers have not studied entry level salaries.

Major and Konar (1984) found that women had lower pay expectations than men at the MBA entry level. Salary comparisons of undergraduates over an eight year period during the 1980s found only a small gender difference in starting salary levels after controlling for academic major, grade point average, and job location (Gardner and Hwang, 1987). A significant major

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* A version of this paper was presented at the Women in Work Conference, Arlington, Texas. May 9-11, 1990

X gender interaction was reported, however. This interaction indicated that within some majors significant salary differentials existed between men and women. Available information on academic performance, job type and employer did not mediate these differences. The residual difference was attributed to either labor market discrimination or poorly formed pay expectations.

This study investigated the pay expectations of graduating seniors and specifically, the relationship between gender and pay expectations for one's self and others. Fair pay was introduced to determine gender perceptions toward the fairness of the wage gap. The questions were designed to elicit starting salaries and peak career salaries from men and women majoring in traditionally male, traditionally female, and gender balanced academic majors. The main purpose of this study was to determine if women and men differed in their initial pay expectations.

Explaining the Gender Wage Gap

Recent literature reviews (Jackson, 1989; Major, 1987) provide a concise critique of recent developments on the gender wage gap issue. A recent edition of the Journal of Social Issues (Vol 45, No. 4) was devoted to this issue and contained articles from various viewpoints. A brief review of several of the key theoretical approaches used by researchers offers a context for

the ensuing discussion.

Relative Deprivation Theory

Building upon the early research by Stouffer (1949) and Runciman (1966) on deprivation, Crosby (1976) developed a model of relative deprivation. This model was applied to the situation of working women. The relative deprivation theory has assumed that the experience of deprivation depended on emotional, cognitive, and structural factors, as well as the objective situation at hand. Crosby focused on the emotional aspects within certain prescribed preconditions: (1) the individual perceives that another possesses an outcome; (2) the individual desires that outcome; (3) the individual feels entitled to the outcome; (4) the individual considers attainment of the outcome as feasible; and (5) the individual believes that the absence of the outcome is not a result of his or her actions (Jackson, 1989).

Crosby and her colleagues (Berstein and Crosby 1980; Crosby 1982) conducted studies using the relative deprivation model. Their results supported some but not all of the model's preconditions. The 1982 examination of working men and women led to more useful results. Crosby found that women were satisfied with their jobs despite an income disparity between men and women

holding similar positions. Women's satisfaction included the pay they received. These particular results tended to substantiate earlier findings that had lead to the "paradox of the contented woman worker" explanation (Deaux, 1979; Schreiber, 1979; and Weaver, 1978).

Using this evidence, Crosby (1982) revised her model. The revised model offered two explanations of the paradox of the contented woman worker. First, women were content with less pay than men because they did not perceive a discrepancy between the pay they wanted and the pay they received. Second, women were content with less pay because they did not perceive a discrepancy between the pay they felt they deserved and the pay they received (Jackson, 1989). Recent research by Major (1989) has been exploring this second argument.

Match to Reality

Research into differences in assigning value to the money men and women receive has not produced clear and consistent findings. Nieva and Guter (1981) concluded that women value pay and promotions less than men. Women value interpersonal relationships and pleasant work environments more than men. Women have apparently adjusted their job values to the reality of low-paying/low status occupations. This "match to reality" explanation has been used to account for women's pay outcomes

(Kanter, 1977; Martin, 1986).

Recent studies have also found gender differences in job values. For example, Major and Konar (1984) found women rated pay less important than men. Beutell and Brewner (1986) reported that women placed greater value on friendly co-workers and good working conditions. Men, on the other hand, sought opportunities to earn money, supervise others and solve important problems.

In some occupations no gender differences have been found, however. Among lawyers, Golding, Resnick and Crosby (1983) learned that female and male attorneys held very similar values. Likewise, Crosby's results (1982) revealed no gender differences among men and women in higher status occupations.

Distributive Justice Theory

The equity or distributive justice theory is another possible explanation for the gender wage gap. Equity theory is based upon four propositions (Homan, 1961; Walster, Walster and Berschied, 1978): (1) individuals will maximize their own outcomes; (2) groups maximize their collective outcomes by evolving a system of equitable rewards; (3) individuals in an inequitable situation become distressed; and (4) distress is relieved by restoring equity or changing one's perceptions. According to Major and Deaux (1982), women allocate less pay to

themselves than men do, even after outperforming co-workers. If women prefer interpersonal relations, then the higher allocations to co-workers would appear reasonable as explanations (Major and Deaux, 1982). However, research addressing this point have not produced definitive results.

Jackson and Grabski (1988) took a more direct approach in measuring pay expectations through the distributive justice theory. Jackson and Grabski argued that previous research had not taken into account occupational status' influence on pay expectations when examining pay expectations. They demonstrated that women had lower fair pay estimates for higher and moderate status positions than men but were similar for low-status occupations. Lower pay in these occupations was also seen as fair pay by women. Women also held lower pay expectations for others than men.

Value of Money

Crosby's explanation for the paradox of the contented woman worker suggests that women value pay less than men. The distributive justice theory also implies value differences about the meaning of money. An implicit assumption of the gender wage gap issue has been the correspondence between wanting and valuing (Jackson, 1989). However, the value of pay or the meaning of money has been neglected in research.

One aspect of the research underlying this study is the development of a model that incorporates the meaning of money into pay expectations research. This model also retains the key value-based (Nieva and Guter, 1981) and the entitlement-based (Major, 1987) explanations presented in earlier research.

Methods

Colleges of the University were classified based on the enrollment status of women. Two colleges were selected where men comprised 70% or more of the students (Agriculture and Engineering); two because the ratio of men to women was about 50-50 (Business and Social Sciences); and three because women comprised 70% or more of the enrollments (Education, Nursing and Human Ecology). For all colleges, except Business and Social Sciences, a stratified weighted random sample was taken by gender. In Business and Social Sciences a simple random sample was obtained. A total of 1,588 students was identified for the study.

An instrument was designed that incorporated questions supporting the major theories used in studying gender differences in the value of pay. Among the items included in the survey were six questions about starting pay and peak pay expectations for self and others. Perceptions of "fair pay" were also included.

Respondents indicated a "gross annual income" for each item. Additional questions were asked regarding attachment to the labor force, work expectations, job status and time out of the work force for family responsibilities.

The instrument was pretested among a group of 100 senior Social Sciences and Business students. These individuals had not been identified for the main sample. The instrument was evaluated for clarity and completeness. No major revisions were made and the pilot sample was included with the main sample for analytical purposes.

The surveys were mailed to the students' local addresses. Surveys were to be returned in business reply envelopes. Reminder letters were sent to all non-respondents two weeks after the original mailing. The follow-up notice raised the level of participation slightly. Analysis of variance was selected as the statistical method for this study. The basic experimental design was a 2 (gender) X 5 (college) factorial design with covariants.

Results

Surveys were received from 447 college seniors, including the pretest group, for a response rate of 26.5%. Women responded at a slightly higher rate than men, 29.6% and 22.5%, respectively. Respondents were majoring in Agriculture (50),

Business (104), Engineering (81), Social Sciences (103), and an "Other" category (97) that included majors in Nursing, Education, and Human Ecology.

Analyses were performed on the six pay measures: expected starting salary for self, expected peak salary for self, expected starting salary for others (currently seeking the same type of job), expected peak salary for "best" others in your field, "fair" starting salary, and "fair" peak salary for the "best" others in your field. The mean responses for these measures by college and gender are presented in Table 1.

Except women in Social Sciences, respondents expected their starting salaries to be higher than the starting salaries of others. Their own starting salaries were also higher than the "fair" starting salary they designated for their field. When comparing peak salaries, all respondents except those in Agriculture would expect to find their salaries below the "best" in their field. When comparing their own peak salary to "fair" peak salaries, nearly every group indicated that they would earn higher salaries than the fair peak salary. The exception, in this case, was men and women in Social Sciences.

On each of the six pay measures, 2 (gender) X 5 (college) analyses of variance were performed. The main effects of gender

were significant for all three peak salary measures, but none of the starting salary measures (Table 2). Compared to males, females expected lower peak salaries for themselves and lower peak salaries for the "best" others in their fields. Women also believed lower peak salaries were fair salaries.

The main effects for college were significant for all six measures. For all starting salary measures, engineering majors reported the highest salaries. Engineers were followed by Business, Social Sciences and Agriculture majors. At the low end was the group of traditional women's majors.

Engineering and Business students ranked at the top in their own peak salaries. Social Sciences and Agriculture were in the middle, and "Other" at the bottom. Across all colleges except "Other," women expected fairly comparable salaries. For "best" peak salaries, Engineering salaries were noticeably lower than Business and Social Sciences. The "best" from Agriculture and "Other" were very comparable. "Fair" peak salaries provided much less variation between majors and the college effect was only significant at the $p \leq .10$ level.

Planned contrasts within college majors clarified the gender differences in initial starting salary estimates (self). Females in Engineering, Business, and "Other" majors expected lower initial salaries for themselves. They also believed lower

starting salaries were fair salaries, compared to males in those same fields. In contrast, there was a tendency for females in Agriculture and Social Sciences to expect higher starting salaries than males. Females in Agriculture also expected higher peak salaries for themselves while females from "other" majors had lower salary expectations.

Additional analyses were attempted to identify mediators of the observed gender differences in pay expectations. Several mediators were considered: self-ratings on qualifications for the job, number of hours expected to work at the job per week, number of years expected to work in this job, how hard one expected to work and time out of the work force for family responsibilities. On each of these potential mediating variables, 2 (gender) X 5 (college) analyses of variance were performed. Only hours worked per week (HRSPERWK), how hard one expects to work (HARDWORK), and TIMEOUT of the work force had a significant gender effect (Table 2). Females indicated that they expected to work longer and harder than males.

The average time students expected to be out of the work force was 28 months. Women indicated that they would have to take a total of 38 months out of the work force for children. Men reported that they expected to be out only 14 months. Some variation existed by college. Engineers were expected to be out only 21 months and "Others" about 36 months. When gender by

college averages were compared, women in traditionally male fields were willing to take as long out of the workforce as women from traditionally women's fields. Men from traditionally male fields had the lowest expected time out of the work force (about 11 months).

Significant college effects were found for the following variables: how confident are you that you will get the job you are applying for (GETJOB) and the status (prestige) of the job being applied for (JOBSTAT). Engineers and Business majors were more confident that they would get the job they wanted. They also rated their jobs as more prestigious than the other three college groups. For JOBSTAT, there also was a significant college X gender interaction effect. Females in Business and Engineering assigned higher prestige ratings to their jobs than males in these fields. Females in the other three major groups rated their jobs less prestigious than males.

When the mediators were entered as covariants in the analyses of variance, the mediators did not account for the gender differences in pay expectations (Table 3). The covariants had more influence on the college main effect. Several mediators were found to be important, especially hours worked per week (HRSPERWK) and number of years expected to work in this job (NYRSJOB).

Discussion

The absence of gender differences on the starting salary measures and the presence of gender differences on the peak salary measures beg to be explained. Information on starting salaries, particularly among Engineering and Business majors, can be helpful in framing initial salary expectations. Students from these majors were more likely to use the placement office on campus. At the placement office, information on salaries was often given as part of career advising programs. The Engineering Manpower Commission also annually reports salary information. As a result, major companies recruiting engineers had very similar salary ranges, about $2,000 in either direction from the average. Accounting salary structures were similar. Gardner and Hwang (1987) found no significant or practical gender differences among engineering and accounting majors in starting salary.

Gender differences for starting salary levels in the other colleges tended to favor women, except in traditional women's majors. The differences may, in part, be attributed to the combination of majors represented by males and females within these colleges. A check, however, of Agriculture and Social Sciences found men and women distributed similarly across majors. Women apparently were more optimistic about their starting salaries than men.

The difficulty occurred when attempting to explain the emergence of strong male dominated salary levels at peak careers. The match to reality explanation can account for these findings only if it is assumed that women majoring in engineering and business are aware that a gender gap does not exist at labor market entry. The gap increased with tenure (Blau and Ferber, 1986). This argument is plausible. Yet given findings by Major and Forcey (1985) that women's low pay expectations are attributed to their lack of knowledge about pay structures, the argument is not very strong. An alternative explanation is that men in Engineering, Business and Social Sciences majors have unrealistic expectations about peak salaries in these fields. Even so, Majors et. al (1984) have found that unrealistically high pay expectations often result in higher actual pay than realistically low pay expectations.

More troubling were the findings that women have lower peak salary expectations for others, and perceive a lower peak salary as fair compared to men. Even with possible mediators that account for breaks in labor market participation and different levels of attachment to the labor market (e.g., length of time with first employer), gender differences remain strong. The explanations based on occupational gender linkage and job status, the most common rationales, appear inadequate to account for these findings.

Returning to the reality explanation, this argument suggests that graduating students have only a slight grasp of the realities of the world of work before labor market entry. Women who buy into the "we can have it all" mentality fail to realize the tradeoffs that will have to made, depending on marriage and family status. Men also need to be aware of similar tradeoffs as they seldom factor non-work related activities into work decisions. If Martin (1989) is correct, students fail to grasp the reality of the labor market, specifically pay structures, even when information is supplied to them.

Comparative - referents also provides a rational explanation for these differences. Work on women in engineering (Gardner and Broadus, 1990) has shown that these women have fewer friends in engineering than men. If same sex referents are used to develop pay structures, women may be forming their structures within a group where pay expectations are already low. Men, on the other hand, are not only using more input from male peers in the field, but have access to older males (e.g., fathers) who are more likely to coach them on pay expectations.

These solutions and others have produced inconsistent reasonings for the gap in pay expectations. Inconsistencies may be traced to inadequacies in defining an operational description of the meaning of money or the value of pay. Gender differences

in the meaning of money may assist in further understanding the "paradox of the contented woman worker."

Consider the proposed model that is illustrated in Figure 1. This model attempts to integrate the value-based and comparative-referents explanations of the "paradox of the contented woman worker" (Jackson, 1989). This model introduces the meaning of money to the causal relationship between gender and pay satisfaction. Also included in this model are job choice and role commitments.

The instruments designed for the meaning of money measure the cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions of the meaning of money. The cognitive dimension refers to the individual's knowledge about money, including actual pay rates and cost of living estimates. The affective dimension captures the individual's evaluation of money. For example, is money good or bad -- moral or immoral. This dimension is conceptually related to past research on the value of money and more recently developed measures on the meaning of money (Furnham and Lewis, 1986).

The final dimension, refers to the individual's behavior on acquiring monetary outcomes when other desirable outcomes are also available. Only one outcome can be selected however. A common example is the choice between working and engaging in

leisure activities. The cognitive and behavioral dimensions are expected to have a reciprocal influence on the affective dimension (e.g., how one feels about money depends on one's knowledge of money). Gender differences are hypothesized to exist along these dimensions.

Gender will further influence role commitments through stereotypic beliefs about family and work roles. Gender also influences job choice through these same stereotypic beliefs about the appropriate careers for men and women (Deaux and Lewis, 1984). Role commitment is also hypothesized to influence job choice directly (e.g., provider role or care-giver role).

The meaning of money variable has proposed causal relationships with pay values, pay expectations, and choice of comparative referents. In the latter case, those who hold similar views on the meaning of money will serve as referents or reinforcers of these values. For example, people who place more meaning on money will seek other people who also evaluate money the same way (Suls, Gaes and Gastorf, 1979; Suls and Miller, 1977; Wheeler and Koestner, 1984). Comparative referents also influence pay expectations. A person having higher paid referents will hold higher pay expectations than those who have lower paid referents (Major, 1987).

This model draws together both the value-based and comparative referents explanations to pay satisfaction. Pay value has a direct effect while referents affect satisfaction indirectly. The most important aspects of the model are that the meaning of money directly influences both values and referents. The paradox of the contented woman worker can now be explained as a woman who will accept less pay than a man because money is less meaningful to her. These women, therefore, place less value on their pay. As a result, they are likely to choose comparative referents who are not likely to cause them to reevaluate their expected pay outcomes (Jackson, 1989).

Since this study did not adequately explain the gender wage gap through traditional explanations, an alternative explanation was warranted. The proposed model suggests strongly that the meaning of money may provide this alternative explanation. By hypothesizing that men and women hold different meanings for money, future research can consider a wide range of issues facing women in the work place, e.g., Do married mothers value pay more or less than childless married women?

Table 1. Gender, College Major, and Pay Expectations (Mean)

Pay Measure and Gender	College					
	Agriculture (50)	Other (97)	Business (104)	Social Sciences (103)	Engineering (81)	Total (441)
Starting Salary - Self						
Females	$23,682.00 (22)	$20,682.00 (71)	$22,826.00 (57)	$24,412.00 (57)	$26,940.00 (23)	$22,991.00 (232)
Males	$22,480.00 (25)	$21,233.00 (15)	$23,602.00 (50)	$22,244.00 (41)	$29,006.00 (41)	$24,185.00 (185)
Peak Salary - Self						
Females	$53,609.00	$36,457.00	$59,705.00	$50,509.00	$50,609.00	$49,345.00
Males	$43,048.00	$46,867.00	$73,706.00	$54,320.00	$83,850.00	$64,388.00
Starting Salary - Others						
Females	$20,750.00	$19,158.00	$21,591.00	$23,491.00	$25,500.00	$21,656.00
Males	$21,500.00	$20,200.00	$21,980.00	$21,134.00	$27,394.00	$22,844.00
Peak Salary - Best Others						
Females	$45,739.00	$43,208.00	$78,583.00	$67,439.00	$46,897.00	$59,500.00
Males	$46,088.00	$55,867.00	$105,050.00	$104,846.00	$69,662.00	$82,774.00
Fair Starting Salaries						
Females	$21,477.00	$20,693.00	$21,914.00	$24,445.00	$25,261.00	$22,483.00
Males	$21,940.00	$21,700.00	$22,240.00	$22,112.00	$27,143.00	$23,294.00
Fair Peak Salary - Best Others						
Females	$43,023.00	$43,359.00	$49,653.00	$52,593.00	$47,261.00	$47,974.00
Males	$43,636.00	$52,179.00	$76,293.00	$58,000.00	$64,636.00	$61,584.00

Note: Ns in parentheses.

Table 2: Gender X College Analyses of Variance: Significant Effects

Starting Salary - Self:	College $F = 14.049$ $p \leq .001$ Gender X College $F = 2.188$ $p \leq .055$
Peak Salary - Self:	Sex $F = 3.386$ $p \leq .038$ College $F = 2.286$ $p \leq .045$
Starting Salary - Others:	College $F = 16.154$ $p \leq .001$
Peak Salary- Best Others:	Gender $F = 5.863$ $p \leq .016$ College $F = 2.312$ $p \leq .001$
Fair Starting Salary:	College $F = 9.37$ $p \leq .001$
Fair Peak Salary:	Gender $F = 9.508$ $p \leq .002$ College $F = 1.90$ $p \leq .093$
Hours Worked Per Week (HRSPERWK):	College $F = 5.401$ $p \leq .001$
Work Hard:	Gender $F = 5.806$ $p \leq .016$
Get Job You Want (GETJOB):	College $F = 1.953$ $p \leq .085$
Job Prestige or Status (JOBSTAT):	College $F = 12.142$ $p \leq .001$ Gender X College $F = 2.781$ $p \leq .017$
TIMEOUT of work force:	Gender $F = 47.486$ $p \leq .001$

Table 3. Gender X College Analyses of Variance with Covariants for Pay Expectations

Starting Salary - Self:

Main:	College F = 13.185	$p \leq .001$
	Gender X College F = 2.599	$p \leq .025$
Covariants:	HRSPERWK F = 2.976	$p \leq .085$
	NYRSJOB F = 16.275	$p \leq .001$

Peak Salary - Self:

Main:	College F = 2.64	$p \leq .037$
	Gender F = 3.049	$p \leq .082$
Covariants:	HRSPERWK F = 7.102	$p \leq .009$

Starting Salary - Others:

Main:	College F = 15.092	$p \leq .001$
Covariants:	HRSPERWK F = 4.916	$p \leq 0.27$
	NYRSJOB F = 14.424	$p \leq .001$

Peak Salary - Best Others:

Main:	College F = 2.557	$p \leq .022$
	Gender F = 3.199	$p \leq .064$
Covariants:	HRSPERWK F = 3.4365	$p \leq .009$
	NDIFFEMP F = 13.099	$p \leq .001$

(NDIFFEMP: Number of Different Employers Work For)

Fair Starting Salary

Main:	College F = 8.710	$p \leq .001$
Covariants:	HRSPERWK F = 11.146	$p \leq .001$
	NYRSJOB F = 19.538	$p < .001$

Fair Peak Salaries - Best Others:

Main:	College F = 2.073	$p \leq .100$
	Gender F = 7.836	$p \leq .004$
CoVariants:	HRSPERWK F = 8.206	$p \leq .005$

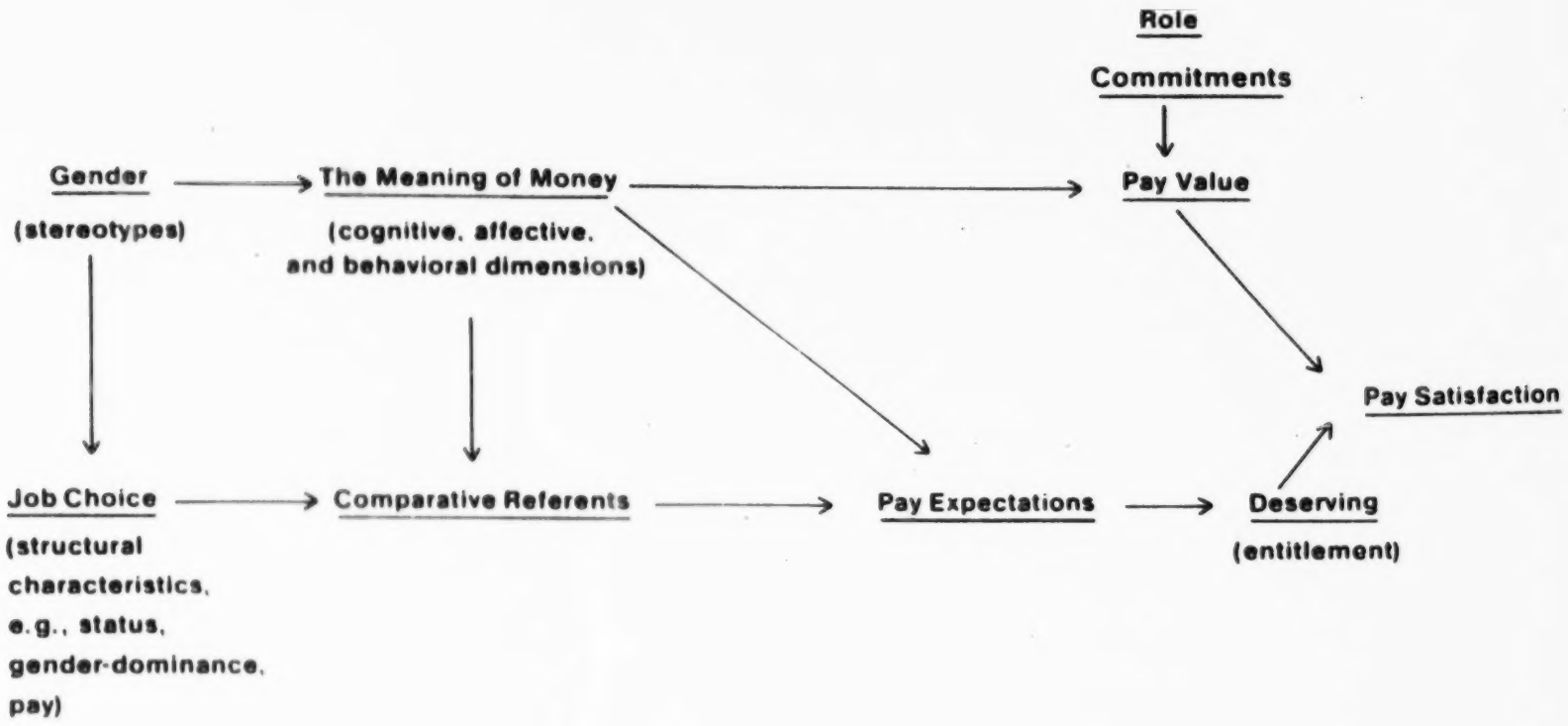

Fig. 1. A model of pay satisfaction.

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